



USDA Forest Service Fire Communications Guidance

- On fires on National Forest System lands, Public Information Officers (PIOs) work for the USDA Forest Service, even if they are not regular USDA Forest Service employees. PIOs on incidents can respond to questions from all news media, including national news media, ***about the incident only***. PIOs will refer all news media questions that are not about the incident that they are working on to the local National Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO), who will determine whether they can be addressed locally, or whether they should be referred to Jennifer Jones, Public Affairs Specialist for the USDA Forest Service at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), or to the USDA Forest Service Washington Office Press Office. Jennifer Jones can be reached at her office at (208) 387-5437, on her mobile phone at (208) 631-0406, or by email at jejones@fs.fed.us
- The USDA Forest Service local unit is responsible for the content of fire communications during and after a fire. PIOs must coordinate continually with the local Forest PAO and/or line officer. Delegations of Authority will stress the importance of line officer responsibility for all fire communications.
- Facebook pages are not approved for the USDA Forest Service. PIOs or other Incident Management Team members will not create Facebook pages for fires on National Forests. Tweets from existing Twitter accounts should alert followers that new information is posted on a website managed by those responsible for the content, such as InciWeb, a National Forest website, or a county website. Social media protocols are under development with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) is key in fire communications. If media are interested in information beyond a specific fire and its management, the PIO should refer questions to the local National Forest PAO. If the question is about a national fire related issue, the local National Forest PAO should refer it to Jennifer Jones at NIFC. The local National Forest PAO and NIFC will be tied in to the USDA Forest Service Washington Office Press Office, which will coordinate with the USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment and the USDA when necessary.
- The USDA Forest Service has signed on to the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group's 2010 Fire Season Communication Themes and has provided additional USDA Forest Service 2010 Fire Season key messages. News media questions that go beyond the 2010 Fire Season Communication Themes or USDA Forest Service key messages should be referred to the local National Forest PAO, who will determine whether they can be addressed locally or whether they should be referred to Jennifer Jones at NIFC. As needs arise, NIFC and the USDA Forest Service Washington Office Press Office can provide additional messages.